

Personal Protective Equipment

Employers are required to provide personal protective equipment (PPE) to employees who may be exposed to hazards (i.e., chemical, environmental, mechanical) that may cause injury, illness, or impairment from absorption, inhalation, physical contact, or light radiation. PPE includes clothing and accessories (boots, gloves, respirators, eye, face, hearing protection, etc.) designed to create a barrier against workplace hazards. The requirement to provide PPE occurs simultaneously with maintaining good engineering, work practices, and/or administrative controls. Respirators should only be used when the previously listed measures do not sufficiently control the amount of harmful dusts, fogs, fumes, mists, gases, smokes, sprays and/or vapors. Note that the use of respirators is accompanied by numerous requirements, such as medical monitoring, fit testing, training, etc.

Vehicle maintenance personnel may be exposed to a variety of chemicals, including solvents, freon, antifreeze, corrosives and petroleum products. PPE requirements may include items such as: nitrile gloves, eye protection, and chemically resistant aprons. To determine your employees' specific PPE needs, the following steps should be followed:

1. Hazard Assessment

Employers are required to evaluate their workplace to determine the presence of hazards requiring the use of PPE. This same hazard assessment is performed as a required component of the Hazard Communication Standard. Employers must certify in writing that a workplace hazard assessment was performed. In addition, employers must inform employees of their PPE selections and ensure that employees use the specified equipment.

A hazard assessment can be performed using the following guidelines:

- a. Survey Facility - Walk through the plant and identify sources of potential hazards to workers; with special consideration given to the following:
 - 1) Chemicals - Review the Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) you have for the chemicals in the business and the PPE necessary will be listed for you.

- 2) Heat - Inspect your business for procedures and equipment that poses potential thermal injuries to employees (e.g., welding, working on engines that are hot)
- 3) Mechanical (e.g., grinders, hydraulic lifts)
- 4) Penetration (sharp edges)
- 5) Compression or impact
- 6) Potentially injurious light radiation (e.g., welding arcs)
- b. Inspect existing PPE supplies and check for evidence of damaged or defective parts.
- c. Organize data collected from the walk-through survey and analyze the information to determine the level of risk present, and the type of engineering controls and PPE that will be required. The MSDS(s) serves as a good reference source for determining the PPE needed.
- d. Document the procedures followed in the hazard assessment to ensure you are complying with the PPE regulation. Remember, the more you document, the easier it is to demonstrate your compliance with the standard during an inspection.

2. Selection of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

A written policy for selecting PPE should be available so that all employees can read and understand the purpose and intention of the policy. The written policy should include the following statements: 1) the PPE selected is based on the performance of specific tasks; and 2) the required PPE is available in appropriate sizes to fit all employees. A sample policy statement follows:

The PPE selected for our employees is based on the type of task being performed and the risk of exposure that is anticipated when employees are exposed to specific hazards. The PPE will be provided in different sizes to fit all employees and will be maintained by manufacturers' guidelines to ensure continued proper performance.

Periodically, management will inspect the PPE to ensure that it is in workable condition, free of defects, and capable of continuing to provide the intended

protection to our employees. Each individual employee must notify management immediately of any damage or defects in the PPE that makes the equipment incapable of properly protecting the employee.

3. Training & Documentation

Before employees begin work using PPE they must be trained to know the following:

- When PPE is necessary
- Which type of PPE is required
- How the equipment is to be worn
- The limitation of the PPE to protect the employee from hazards
- The proper care, maintenance, useful life, and disposal of PPE.

Employers are required to certify in writing that training has been carried out and that employees understand it. Each written certification must include:

- The name of the employee trained
- The dates of training
- Certification of training for PPE

A more detailed guide covering the proper selection and use of Personal Protective Equipment is available from the Bureau of Safety Education and Training (BuSET.)

This guide is available free of charge and may be obtained by calling BuSET at (317) 232-2688 or by using the BuSET order form on the Fax-On-Demand system.